



Puss in Boots

by Stephen Duckham

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PantoScripts Sample

PUSS IN BOOTS

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

OGRE
 GRIM (The Ogre's Henchman)
 PATCHEM (The Town Cobbler)
 COLIN (Owner of the Old Mill)
 PUSS (His Cat)
 WHEELER
 DEALER
 KING BUMBLE
 QUEEN BEE
 PRINCESS MELINDA
 PUSS IN BOOTS

CHORUS OF VILLAGERS

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1 OUTSIDE THE OGRE'S CASTLE
 SCENE 2 THE MILL IN CATALAND
 SCENE 3 A STREET
 SCENE 4 INSIDE PATCHEM'S SHOE SHOP
 SCENE 5 OUTSIDE THE OGRE'S CASTLE
 SCENE 6 A CLEARING AND LAKE IN THE ROYAL WOODS

ACT TWO

SCENE 1 OUTSIDE THE OGRE'S CASTLE
 SCENE 2 THE PALACE BALLROOM
 SCENE 3 ON ROUTE TO THE OGRE'S CASTLE
 SCENE 4 THE SECRET ENTRANCE TO THE OGRE'S CASTLE
 SCENE 5 THE KEEP IN THE CASTLE
 SCENE 6 ON THE WAY HOME
 SCENE 7 THE WEDDING OF THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS

PUSS IN BOOTS – PRODUCTION NOTES

SCENERY

The scenery can be kept fairly simple with the use of two front cloths (or tabs) and five main scenes.

The first front cloth represents the outside of the Ogre's Castle and the second A Street in the village.

Act One Scene 2 should show the exterior of the Mill up right and Patchem's shop front on stage left. If it is possible to have a small bridge up left this will add to the overall scene, but it is not essential.

Act One Scene 4 Patchem's Shop could be played on a cloth, flats or a set of tabs with free standing practical shelves and a counter. If it is impossible to perform the 'vision' sequence through a gauze in the back wall of the shop, put Patchem, Colin and Puss in a spot down right and act out the story down left.

Act One Scene 6 The Woodland Lake is a back cloth and tree wings. If you can build bushes up stage that separate to reveal Colin as the Marquis of Carabas this will add to the finale of act one.

The Ballroom in Act Two Scene 2 can be quite elaborate or simply done with drapes and double as the Finale.

Act Two Scene 3 is only possible if a car journey can be projected onto a screen. If not the scene can be omitted completely.

Act Two Scene 4 is one of the front cloths. If it is not practical to have a sliding wall flat as part of the Castle, the cast can refer to it as being just off stage and a sound effect of sliding stone will complete the illusion.

Act Two Scene 5, The Keep in the Ogre's Castle is the most difficult scene as there is a need for an opening up stage. If flats or a cut cloth are impractical, the effect can be achieved by hanging a series of dark coloured cloth panels that can be opened a few feet when required. Changing the Ogre into a mouse can be achieved in various ways depending on the facilities of your theatre. A motorised mouse is the most effective (radio controlled toy car disguised as a mouse), but a simple 'soft toy' mouse on a fine wire pulled across the stage will work just as well.

CHARACTERS

Casting is fairly straightforward.

Colin can be played by a male or female. A good all round character with a strong singing voice is required.

As with most pantomimes there is always a shortage of female parts, therefore I recommend that Puss and Puss In Boots be played by women.

Melinda is the Principal Girl with a modern outlook on life and a spirited character. She must be pretty and possess a good lyrical singing voice.

Patchem is a pivotal character in the pantomime and should be played with a great sense of charm and humour. This is a part that can be played by an actor aged anywhere between mid thirties to mid fifties.

The Queen is the Dame and should always be played for laughs. She keeps the King in his place but is never over bossy or malicious. Her rapport with the audience is very important and any chance to include them should be acted upon.

The King is her foil. As his name implies he is a little *bumbling* in his manner, but basically he is a kind man and a big softy!

Wheeler and Dealer are the comedy knockabout couple. Wheeler usually takes charge of each situation with Dealer the proverbial beat behind everyone and everything.

Grim is one of the most interesting characters in the story. On no account should he be played similar to the Ogre. The audience will like to boo him as much as possible, but he should also be played for laughs. His character is one of a butler who feels the job is beneath him, but at all times must please his master.

The 'Mmm' reference in his dialogue is a nasal sound – only use it when stated, as too much will be overkill. His character should be based on a cross between Kenneth Williams, Noel Coward and Jeeves!

The Ogre is not a Giant. He is a bulky, ugly creature, slightly stooped with a menacing voice. He should be quite repulsive to any other human being.

MUSIC

The placing of musical numbers and who sings them is suggested in the script, but it is up to the director to decide what to use. A word of advice: Pantomime audiences – particularly the younger members – like the story to keep moving, so don't make the musical sequences too long, especially ballads.

There is a Song Sheet available for this script. Please contact NODA if you wish to use it.

I hope you enjoy doing this version of 'Puss in Boots' and have a great success with your production.

Stephen Duckham

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ACT ONE

SCENE 1 OUTSIDE THE OGRE'S CASTLE

[After the overture the music becomes sinister and a low rumble of thunder is heard. The lights come up to reveal a front cloth depicting a forbidding looking castle. The OGRE enters left. HE sees the audience.]

- OGRE Oh no! Don't tell me it's open day at the castle again! All you people traipsing around the grounds. And children! They tell me you can't beat children. Pity! Mind you, I quite like children – especially on toast!! *[Audience reaction.]* Now where is that servant of mine? *[Calling.]* Grim! Grim, where are you?
- GRIM *[Off.]* Coming master.
- OGRE Get here at once. *[GRIM enters left. He is the OGRE'S manservant and always carries a whip on his belt. (Note that whenever "Mmm" appears in GRIM'S dialogue it denotes the nasal delivery as described in the character breakdown.)]*
- GRIM What can I do for you master?
- OGRE I hear that the old Miller in the town is dead.
- GRIM Mmm, last week master. Very sad! *[HE chuckles evilly to himself.]*
- OGRE And he died without making a will I understand.
- GRIM Quite so master, quite so.
- OGRE Then by my reckoning all his belongings must be auctioned off to pay the death duties and the building and land revert to the landowner – which happens to be me!
- GRIM That is the law I believe master.
- OGRE I know it is - I made it!
- GRIM There *is* a son. Shouldn't the property go to him?
- OGRE *[Shouting.]* A son?
- GRIM Mmm. Yes master. He has been away from the town for many years. Off seeking his fortune I understand.
- OGRE Then he won't know anything about his father's death. By the time he gets home the Mill and the land will be mine. Go and deal with the auction.
- GRIM At once, master.
- OGRE Oh, there is another matter I wish you to attend to. The Princess Melinda is now of age and ready to take a husband. Make it known to their Majesties that I wish to offer her my hand in marriage!
- GRIM *[Surprised.]* Really master?

- OGRE Why are you so surprised? *[Grabbing GRIM by the lapels of his coat.]*
I am more than worthy of her and have more to offer her than anyone
else in this pathetic town!
- GRIM Of course you have master. *[The OGRE lets him go.]* And may I say
you cut a dashing figure of a man. What woman could resist you?
- OGRE Yes, I do have that rugged sort of look, don't I? *[Audience reaction.]*
Be quiet you snivelling brats! When I have married the Princess I can
get rid of the King and Queen and rule the whole land myself. *[To*
GRIM] Now go quickly and see to everything.
- GRIM Yes master. *[HE exits.]*
- OGRE And when I am ruler I shall make everyone do my bidding. They will all
be forced to work for me and make me even richer than I am now! *[HE*
roars with laughter. Audience reaction.] Oh keep quiet you raucous
rabble! If you've come here for the tour why don't I take you down
stairs to begin with, to the torture chamber? *[HE roars with laughter*
again as the lights fade out. The scene changes to

SCENE 2 THE OLD MILL IN CATALAND

*[The scene is outside the Old Mill, which is up right. There is a bridge
up left, which crosses a stream running up behind the mill. On stage
left is PATCHEM'S cobbler's shop and stage right are trees. A large
sign saying "AUCTION TODAY" is outside the mill. The CHORUS is
on as the scene opens.]*

OPENING CHORUS

[At the end of the number some of the CHORUS notice the sign.]

- 1st MAN What's this? Who is auctioning off the Millers' property?
- 1st WOMAN I don't know. That sign appeared this morning.
- 2nd MAN But the Mill now belongs to Colin, the Miller's son. Surely he's not
selling.
- 2nd WOMAN Nobody has seen him for over a year.
- 3rd MAN What about Patchem, the cobbler. He's Colin's friend. Let's ask him.
[ALL agree and call "Patchem". PATCHEM, the cobbler, enters from
the shop, left.]
- PATCHEM 'Morning all. I'm afraid I can't stop chatting. Today is my day for
stocktaking. What's everyone so excited about?
- 1st MAN Did you know about this auction?
- PATCHEM No. Who's organised that?

1st WOMAN We don't know. Have you had any word from Colin?

PATCHEM Not since I wrote and told him about his poor father. He should be arriving home today. *[GRIM enters down left.]*

GRIM Greetings all! *[ALL groan at the sight of him.]* Glad to see a good turn out for the auction!

PATCHEM Have you arranged this?

GRIM On the orders of my master, the Ogre.

1st MAN But he can't do that. The Mill belongs to Colin.

GRIM There is no will, so the property is forfeit to pay the outstanding debts.

PATCHEM We'll see about that when Colin gets here.

GRIM By then it will be too late. The auction is about to start and everyone has been notified. Even their Majesties are going to attend!

PATCHEM Looking for a few bargains no doubt. The word is the royal household is as poor as we are since the Ogre started taking everything he could get his hands on.

GRIM *[Cracking his whip.]* Be careful of what you say. Upset my master and you could be residing in the dungeons for the rest of your life!

2nd MAN Who is presiding over the auction?

GRIM I have engaged a very reputable firm to handle the proceedings. They should be here any minute. *[Aside.]* I must report to my master that everything is going according to plan. Mmm! *[HE exits down left.]*

PATCHEM This is dreadful. We can't let the Ogre swindle Colin out of his inheritance. *[The CHORUS agrees. COLIN appears on the bridge. He is carrying a travelling bag and a note.]*

COLIN Who's trying to swindle me?

PATCHEM Colin! *[ALL greet COLIN who crosses down centre.]*

COLIN Hello my friends. I came home as soon as I got your note Patchem. What's going on?

PATCHEM Oh Colin, we're all very sorry about your father. *[ALL sympathise.]* But the Ogre is trying to get his hands on the Mill and all the land, which by right belongs to you.

COLIN *[Putting down his bag.]* Oh he is, is he? Then it's time to put up a fight. *[ALL agree.]*

PATCHEM But how? The Ogre has powers than none of us can comprehend. I've heard he can turn himself into all sorts of terrifying monsters!

COLIN We must work out a plan. In the meantime don't let on that I'm back.

1st MAN What about the auction?

COLIN Let it go ahead. Only there won't be anything in the Mill to auction because we'll move everything out into the old barn. *[ALL agree with the plan.]*

PATCHEM I'd like to see the look on the Ogre's face when he finds out! *[There is a loud "meow" and PUSS, the Mill cat, bounds on and up to COLIN.]*

COLIN Puss! How good to see you again. Have you missed me? *[PUSS nods then pulls at COLIN'S clothes and indicates the sign.]* Don't worry. I'm not going to let them auction you off! I'm back for good!

SONG – COLIN, PATCHEM & CHORUS

[At the end of the number ALL exit into the Mill. WHEELER and DEALER enter over the bridge.]

WHEELER Here we are. The old mill by the stream!

DEALER *[Singing.]* Nellie Dean!

WHEELER Shut up. Save your voice for the auction.

DEALER Oh yes, the auction. 'Ere, what is an auction?

WHEELER Shh! Not so loud. We're supposed to be Messers. Wheeler and Dealer, a reputable firm of liquidators.

DEALER But I'm not a liquid hater. I like a pint of Guinness!

WHEELER Not that sort of liquid! We've got to dispose of any assets!

DEALER *[Backing away – his hand to his rear.]* I don't like the sound of that!

WHEELER Look, it was too good an opportunity to miss. We needed a job and this seemed right up our street.

DEALER What do we have to do?

WHEELER *[Pointing to the Mill.]* Sell all the contents of that mill for the most money.

DEALER Oooh, do we get to keep it?

WHEELER Of course we don't get to keep it!

DEALER Well what's the point of doing it for nothing?

WHEELER We don't do it for nothing; we get a percentage of the final amount.
DEALER Oh!

WHEELER Which we split half each. Thirty percent to you, seventy to me! *[GRIM enters down left.]*

GRIM Ah, there you are.

DEALER Good grief! It's - *[Topical name.]*

GRIM Isn't it about time you got the auction underway?

WHEELER Just about to start your honour! Dealer, you go and get the lots!

DEALER The lot? All by myself?

WHEELER The "lots"! Each item is a lot.

DEALER I know - especially sideboards and double beds!

WHEELER Just get the small things. I'll help you with the others.

GRIM Are you sure you know what you're doing? My master wouldn't like it if anything went wrong.

WHEELER Of course! We're very experienced in this business. We've auctioned some of the oldest antiques in the world.

DEALER He's been out with most of 'em!

GRIM *[Disparagingly.]* Mmm. Really?

WHEELER Yes. The first penny black.

DEALER Cleaned it up and sold it for tuppence!

WHEELER The Boy David

DEALER He was 'armless enough!

WHEELER Elgin's Marbles!

DEALER *[To WHEELER.]* I didn't know he'd lost 'em!

WHEELER The Constable's 'Haystack'!

DEALER The Moaning Lisa!

GRIM Yes all right, all right. Let's see how much you can raise today.

WHEELER *[Calling.]* Roll up, roll up. Grand auction about to start. *[GRIM exits down left as the CHORUS enters. Among them is PATCHEM.]*

PATCHEM You can't start yet?

WHEELER Why not?

PATCHEM Their Majesties aren't here.

DEALER Their Majesties?

PATCHEM Yes. They especially wanted to attend this morning.

DEALER *[Aside to WHEELER.] 'Ere, I didn't know royalty was going to be here. If they find out we're not who we say we are, they could throw us into the clink!*

WHEELER Don't be daft! Just act as though you've been doing this for years! Come on. *[THEY exit into the Mill.]*

FANFARE

[The music plays and the KING is heard off stage.]

KING Make way, make way. *[HE backs on stage over the bridge.]* Make way for their Majesties, King Bumble and Queen Bee! *[HE turns and comes down stage.]* Oh it's so humiliating not having someone to announce you!

PATCHEM *[Bowing.]* Your Majesty.

KING Morning Patchem.

PATCHEM But where is the Queen, sire?

KING Just parking the carriage! Last time she left it on a double yellow line and the horse got clamped! He's never been the same since!

QUEEN *[Off.]* Bumble, where are you?

FANFARE

KING *[Crossing up to the bridge.]* Here she is now. Make way for her Majesty, Queen Bee! *[The QUEEN enters over the bridge and trips and bumps into the KING who falls over.]*

QUEEN Have that bridge removed! *[ALL bow and curtsey.]* Where is the King? He always keeps me waiting! *[The KING goes to get up but the QUEEN steps on him as SHE crosses the stage.]* Bumble, Bumble where are you?

KING Here my dear!

QUEEN *[Turning to look at him.]* Well get up. There's no need to grovel to me!

KING *[Standing.]* No dear.

QUEEN And put your crown straight!

KING Yes dear!

QUEEN Good morning everyone.

ALL Good morning your Majesty.

- QUEEN *[To the audience.]* What a good turn out! How are you all? *[Audience response.]* Come along now, speak to Queeny! *[SHE gets the audience to respond.]* Now I don't hold with too much royal protocol. We're very progressive at the palace! I'd like us all to be friendly and use first names. Would you like that? *[Audience responds.]* Oh good! *[Indicating the KING.]* Now this is Bumble and I'm Bee! Isn't that original? Now I want you all to shout out your names! Will you do that? *[SHE gets the audience to shout out their names and quickly repeats any SHE can hear.]* Well I think I got them all! Now we all know each other every time I see you I'll shout "Hello my people" - *[SHE waves a regal hand.]* - and you shout back "Hello Bee" and wave to me. Will you do that? *[Audience responds.]* Let's have a practice! *[SHE shouts out and they all shout back. This happens a couple of times.]* Wonderful. Now what about this auction? Who's handling it?
- [WHEELER and DEALER enter rather agitated and move down stage. THEY bow.]*
- WHEELER We are, your Majesty. Messers. Wheeler and Dealer, auctioneers extraordinaire!
- QUEEN Well now I'm on the look out for a new dishwasher.
- PATCHEM Is the old one worn out?
- KING Yes and my hands will never be the same again!
- QUEEN And I could do with a new chest -
- KING No comment!
- QUEEN - of drawers!
- WHEELER I'm afraid there's been a hitch.
- QUEEN *[Starting to scratch.]* What sort of an itch?
- WHEELER There doesn't seem to be any items in the Mill to auction.
- KING What? Nothing?
- DEALER No. The "lots" gone. *[HE laughs at his own joke.]* The lots gone – get it!!
- QUEEN This is preposterous. You're just trying to stop me having first pick of the good clobber! Come along Bumble, I want everyone to know what I've marked. *[SHE exits into the Mill.]*
- KING I'm not showing my bruises to anyone! *[HE follows HER off. ALL laugh.]*
- PATCHEM Well that was a quick auction. *[To WHEELER and DEALER.]* It looks as though you two are out of a job! *[ALL exit except WHEELER and DEALER. PATCHEM into his shop.]*

DEALER Now what do we do?

WHEELER There's something not quite right here. *[GRIM enters down left.]*

DEALER Yes and it's just walked on!

GRIM What's happening? Why haven't you started the auction?

WHEELER We haven't started the auction because there's nothing to auc!

GRIM What?

DEALER Someone has whisked away the whatnots!

GRIM So these simple folk are trying to trick me are they? Mmm, well no matter, the Mill and land is still forfeit. No doubt the contents would have fetched a paltry sum.

DEALER You mean we're selling it for chicken feed?

WHEELER Shut it. *[To GRIM.]* What about us? You hired us to do a job. It's not our fault there's nothing to do it with!

DEALER Yes! Where's our money?

GRIM Perhaps you would like to talk to my master. He authorises all payments. Come this way. *[HE exits left. DEALER goes to follow but WHEELER pulls him back.]*

WHEELER Where do you think you're going?

DEALER To get our money! I'm going to ask him straight. I'll not mince words!

WHEELER No, but he'll mince you and have you for dinner. *[DEALER swallows hard. THEY look at each other.]*

BOTH Job centre!! *[THEY exit. COLIN enters from the mill followed by PUSS.]*

COLIN Well Puss, at least we've managed to save all our belongings for a while. Now I've got to figure out a way to save the Mill from the Ogre's clutches. *[PUSS nods.]* If only I could find the money to pay off the debts. *[PRINCESS MELINDA enters over the bridge. SHE is dressed quite simply. COLIN turns and sees her.]* Oh good morning.

MELINDA Hello. Where is everyone?

COLIN Gone I'm afraid. There was no auction after all. *[PUSS is "purring" around MELINDA.]*

MELINDA Hello Puss. You're very friendly. *[SHE strokes PUSS.]* Where have you come from?

COLIN The Mill. We both live there.

MELINDA Oh you're the long lost Miller's son.

COLIN Yes. My name is Colin. You know I'm sure we've met before somewhere. *[Giving her a nudge.]* It wasn't in the back row of the – *[Name of local cinema.]* – during a showing of – *[Name of latest blockbuster film.]* – was it?

MELINDA I'm afraid I've never been to the – *[Cinema.]*

COLIN Are you sure? I don't usually forget a face. Especially not one as pretty as yours! *[PUSS nudges COLIN towards MELINDA.]* Puss, stop it! *[PATCHEM enters from his shop.]*

PATCHEM Oh, good morning your Royal Highness.

COLIN *[Stunned.]* Royal Highness?

MELINDA Good morning Patchem. I've come to collect my new shoes.

PATCHEM Oh your Royal Highness, I would have sent them to the palace!

COLIN *[Weakly.]* P-Palace!!

MELINDA It's all right. I felt like some fresh air, so I decided to walk into the town. I thought I'd find mummy and daddy here, or maybe they're at the – *[Name of cinema.]*

COLIN *[Bowing.]* Princess Melinda! Your Royal Highness! Please forgive me – I know I – I mean I didn't know –

MELINDA *[Laughing.]* What's your name again?

COLIN Colin Ma'am. Oh whatever will you think?

MELINDA *[Teasing him.]* I think you should stop taking things so seriously.

PATCHEM I'll get your shoes right away, your Highness. *[HE exits into shop.]*

COLIN I should be going too.

MELINDA What for?

COLIN Well it's not right for me to be here with you – like this. I mean - Royalty and all!

MELINDA Don't be silly. I don't hold with all that protocol. *[Getting an idea.]* I know. Why don't you pretend I'm the girl you thought I was at the cinema?

COLIN But highness –

MELINDA Not highness – Melinda. We're sitting there watching a scary movie. *[COLIN smiles.]* No. A romantic one.

COLIN *[The smile disappearing.]* Oh oh!

MELINDA Where the boy and girl have just met and fallen madly in love.

COLIN But –

MELINDA We all need a little love – *[To PUSS.]* – don't we Puss? *[PUSS nods, looks front and yawns.]* You see – Puss agrees.

DUET – MELINDA AND COLIN

[During the number, PUSS sits to one side watching them. At the end of the number the KING and QUEEN enter.]

QUEEN *[To audience.]* Hello my people! *[Audience responds.]* Melinda, my dear.

MELINDA Hello mummy – daddy.

KING What are you doing here?

MELINDA I've just come to town to pick up my new pair of shoes Patchem has made for me.

QUEEN You shouldn't be out on your own. It's not the done thing!

MELINDA But I'm not on my own. I have a charming escort.

KING And who are you young fellow me lad?

COLIN Colin, your Majesty. I'm the miller's son.

QUEEN Oh it's you who's led us a wild goose chase, is it? Arranging an auction with nothing to sell.

COLIN I assure you your Majesty, I knew nothing about an auction. I only arrived back in town this morning. This is all the work of the Ogre.

KING Ugh! Not him. That awful creature. He's taking more and more of our land and there's nothing we can do about it.

COLIN I wouldn't be too sure of that. Now I'm back I intend to put a stop to all the injustice that's been going on.

QUEEN I don't hold out much hope of you succeeding. The Ogre and his dreadful Henchman Grim, have powers very few of us know about. *[GRIM enters down left.]*

GRIM Did somebody mention my name? *[ALL recoil away from him.]* Ah, your Majesties. I'm so glad I've run into you!

KING Well you can run away again!

GRIM My *gentle* master the Ogre has commanded me to offer Her Royal Highness Princess Melinda his hand, his wealth and his unworthy self in marriage.

MELINDA What??

COLIN Never!

KING/QUEEN The Ogre??

QUEEN For our daughter? One could hardly make a worse choice!

KING *[Taking her to one side.]* On the other hand my dear, he is very rich and our funds are very, very low!!

MELINDA Daddy!

QUEEN Really Bumble! How could you think of such a thing?

KING Er, quite so, quite so! *[Crosses to GRIM.]* It's out of the question, quite out of the question! *[GRIM cracks his whip. The KING runs back to the QUEEN.]*

GRIM May I remind you that my master is very powerful. *[Crossing up centre – looking MELINDA over.]* Mmm! *[Taken with what HE sees.]* Oh! Mmm! And is not used to being turned down. *[To the QUEEN.]* Mmm!

QUEEN *[Looking at the KING and copying GRIM.]* Mmm! Well tell your master he must apply formally, in triplicate, for the hand of the Princess at the appro – *[SHE gets stuck on this word.]* Appro – *[Tries something else.]* The right time.

GRIM Mmm! I shall be back at the *appropriate* time your Majesties! *[HE bows and moves onto the bridge.]*

KING So kind of you to call. Any time you're over the river – do drop in! *[GRIM snarls and exits.]*

COLIN This is terrible. Your Majesties, you can't possibly think of letting your daughter marry the Ogre.

QUEEN You're quite right young man. We must do something and quickly. I know, we must arrange for her to be married to a person of high standing and good breeding. An Earl or a Lord. Who do we know who's available?

MELINDA Mother, I would like to have a say in who I marry!

QUEEN Of course my dear. I know we'll give a grand ball and invite all the eligible young men in the kingdom.

KING But that will cost a packet!

QUEEN Oh put it all on the plastic and pay for it later! Besides, we'll make a fortune with all the merchandising and T.V rights! *[Getting carried away.]* Oh the marriage will be the talk of the year! Marriage! Such a beautiful word!

KING It's not a word, it's a sentence!

MELINDA *[Near to tears.]* Oh this is too much! *[SHE runs off.]*

KING Melinda!

QUEEN Don't worry, I'll have a talk with her. *[PATCHEM enters carrying a pair of shoes.]*

PATCHEM Oh, has her Highness gone? I've got her new shoes here.

KING I'll tell her when I see her. I expect she'll call for them later.

PATCHEM Thank you, Sire. And the bill.

KING Bill? Never heard of him! *[HE moves away.]*

COLIN Your Majesty, I'm very worried about the Princess. With that Ogre and his henchman about, she shouldn't be walking around unaccompanied.

QUEEN Bumble, this young man is quite right. Anything could happen to her. Have a couple of guards assigned to her at all time.

KING But we don't have any guards. We couldn't afford to pay them - remember?

QUEEN There must be some people around who are looking for an interesting position with board and lodgings –

KING - and no pay!

QUEEN Ssh! *[SHE calls.]* Come here everyone. I have a royal announcement. *[CHORUS enters.]* We have, at the palace, vacancies for two royal attendants. *[WHEELER and DEALER rush on.]*

WHEELER Look no further.

DEALER We're vacant!

PATCHEM You can say that again!

KING I trust you have excellent references?

WHEELER Impeccable, your Majesty.

DEALER I wrote them myself. *[WHEELER hits him.]*

QUEEN *[Enthusing.]* How fortunate! How splendid!

KING How much?

WHEELER For you Sire, there will be a very special price.

KING Well it can't be too special for me!

QUEEN Start immediately. Go straight to the palace and get yourselves dressed in the royal livery.

DEALER I'd prefer to wear clothes! *[WHEELER hits him.]*

QUEEN Now that's settled we can think about the ball. We'll *throw* it this Saturday. Everyone's invited. Send out the word that all eligible young men of breeding...

KING - and money!

QUEEN - may ask to be considered as suitors to her Royal Highness. *[General excitement.]* Patchem, I shall require a new pair of shoes for the occasion. I'll call in later for a fitting.

PATCHEM Yes, your Majesty.

QUEEN Well today hasn't turned out so bad after all. All this talk of balls and weddings makes me feel like celebrating!

NUMBER – COMPANY

[At the end of the number the lights fade out and the scene changes to

SCENE 3 A STREET

[Front cloth scene depicting another part of the village. GRIM enters down left.]

GRIM I'll have to keep an eye on that young miller's son. I think he could prove to be a minor irritation in the future. But should he get in the way of my masters plans he'll find himself languishing in the castle dungeon until his bones rot! The master won't be pleased that his claim on the Mill has met with a few obstacles. I shall have to placate him with thoughts of being married to the Princess. Mmm. And marry him she will, I shall see to that! Those two numbskulls have got themselves a job at the palace. Unbeknownst to them, they will be of use to me there. Now I must report back to the Ogre. *[HE laughs and exits. WHEELER and DEALER enter right.]*

WHEELER A job at the palace. That's not bad you know.

DEALER Here, do you think we'll get board and lodging and meals thrown in?

WHEELER I don't see why not.

DEALER And a decent wage! No more doing jobs for nothing like the last one!

WHEELER No. We should insist on our first week's wages in advance.

DEALER Good idea. Here's the King now. Why don't you ask him?

WHEELER Right. *[KING enters right.]* Hello there, your Maj!

KING Ah, the new Royal attendants. How do you like the job?

DEALER Very nice thank you!

WHEELER We were thinking about our remuneration.

KING Eh?

DEALER Wages.

WHEELER Our usual contracts require a week's wages in advance!

KING In advance?

WHEELER *[Talking in a posh voice.]* Yes. We have a lot of out of pocket expenses to keep up appearances as becoming a member of the Royal household!

KING Well – yes I suppose you do. How much were you thinking of?

DEALER About forty –

WHEELER *[Covering DEALER'S mouth.]* - fifty-pounds should do as a start!

KING Fifty pounds?

WHEELER Each!

KING A hundred pounds? But the royal personage never carries money. It's not the done thing.

DEALER Oh that's all right. We'll lend it you.

KING *[Suddenly excited at having some money.]* Would you really?

WHEELER Of course.

KING I say, that's awfully decent of you. *[WHEELER and DEALER give him money.]* Now, a hundred pounds you say.

DEALER That's right!

KING Here you are then. *[HE starts to count the money out into WHEELER and DEALER'S hands.]* One, two, three, four, how long have you two been working together?

WHEELER Oh for about ten years.

KING Really? Ten. *[Counting.]* Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen. Do you have any family?

DEALER No, but my parents had twenty children.

KING How many?

DEALER Twenty.

KING Twenty! *[Counting.]* Twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three. Do you live around these parts?

WHEELER Yes. *[HE gives the name of a local street.]* Number seventy-six.

KING Seventy six! *[Counting.]* Seventy-seven, seventy-eight.

DEALER And I'm at ninety-six.

KING Ninety-six *[Counting.]* Ninety-seven, ninety-eight, ninety-nine and one more is one hundred. There you are.

WHEELER Thank you, Sire.

KING Now run along and get what you need!

DEALER We will. Nice doing business with you.

KING See you at the palace. *[WHEELER and DEALER exit left as the QUEEN enters right. SHE carries a big dress box.]*

QUEEN Hello my people! *[Audience shouts out.]* Ah, Bumble there you are. What are you up to?

KING *[Pocketing the rest of the money.]* Oh just taking care of palace affairs, my dear. *[Indicating the box.]* You haven't bought another new outfit?

QUEEN Yes, I couldn't resist it when I saw it hanging in *[Local shop name.]* window.

KING But my dear we are exceeding our allowance.

QUEEN Oh I'm sure the Royal purse can stretch a little.

KING Any more stretching and the elastic will give altogether!

QUEEN But I had to have something to set off my new shoes from Patchem.

KING New shoes? Oh really!

QUEEN They're for the ball. We have to create a good impression for all our wealthy guests!

KING I suppose so.

QUEEN Have you made out a list of who's going to be invited?

KING I was on my way back to the palace to do just that.

QUEEN *[Pointing to the audience.]* What about this lot out here? They're my friends you know. Well most of them! There are certain ones who might not fit in! I mean look at what some of them have got on!

KING And look who they're with!!

QUEEN Yes. *[To someone in the audience.]* Hello dear, is that your husband next to you or is it novelty night? Oh it is and it is!!

KING Now, now dear. Don't upset the populace!

QUEEN No, you're right. I mustn't upset my friends. *[SHE calls out.]* Hello my people! *[Audience responds.]* I tell you what, how would you like to see my new dress? *[Audience responds.]* All right, I'll give you a sneak preview! *[SHE opens the box and takes out a dress that is made up of the American Stars and Stripes.]* Isn't it fabulous?

KING *[Open mouthed.]* I can't begin to tell you what I think of it!

QUEEN It's called the 'American Look'!

KING The American look?

QUEEN Yes. One yank and it's off! *[The KING reels in amazement.]* Come along now Bumble, don't dawdle. There's a lot to do. *[SHE exits left followed by the KING. COLIN and PUSS enter right.]*

COLIN I don't know Puss, it's been a strange sort of day. First I arrive back in town to find my home ready to be sold from beneath me! Then I meet the loveliest girl I've ever seen only to find out she's a Princess and way above my station. *[PUSS gives him a nudge.]* It's true. I'd never stand a chance with her even if I did go to the ball. She'd only have eyes for all those Lords and Earls. *[PUSS shakes his head.]* And look at this. My only pair of boots has got a hole in them. Not the sort of thing to go dancing in! I wonder if Patchem could mend them.

[PATCHEM enters.]

PATCHEM Mend what?

COLIN Oh Patchem, I was just showing Puss the large hole in my boots!

PATCHEM Oh dear, they have seen better days, haven't they? Why don't you drop by my shop and I'll see what I can do.

COLIN *[In low spirits.]* Thank you.

PATCHEM Cheer up Colin, a hole in a pair of boots isn't the end of the world!

COLIN No, but thinking I could be a suitor to the Princess is.

PATCHEM Oh.

COLIN I need to show that I'm worthy of her hand. I need a title or something.

PATCHEM Sorry, I only deal in shoes!

COLIN How do people get titles?

- PATCHEM They do brave and courageous deeds then get great honours bestowed on them!
- COLIN Brave deeds? Like what?
- PATCHEM Search me! *[PUSS starts to shadow box as though fighting someone.]*
- COLIN Puss, what are you up to? *[PUSS walks around trying to look fierce.]*
- PATCHEM *[Laughing.]* He's trying to look like some fiercesome beast! *[PUSS nods and fights again.]*
- COLIN *[As an idea dawns.]* That's it! He's trying to tell me I should go and fight the Ogre! *[PUSS wipes his brow and staggers off stage.]* If I rid the land of him I'm sure to get a title and then I can marry Melinda!
- PATCHEM Oh fine talk! And how do you propose to do that? You know he has all sorts of magical powers. You could never defeat him.
- COLIN Well I won't know unless I try! And anyway, what have I got to lose?

NUMBER – COLIN AND PATCHEM

[At the end of the number THEY exit and the lights fade. The scene changes to

SCENE 4 PATCHEM'S SHOE SHOP

[There are shelves of shoes and a counter. There are two doors, one to the outside and the other to the back of the shop. (See Production notes in the introduction.) When the scene opens the CHORUS is helping with the stocktaking.]

NUMBER – CHORUS

[This can be a number or possibly a short choreographed piece showing them all stocktaking. At the end PATCHEM enters from the street.]

- PATCHEM Oh thank you all for helping me. I don't know what I'd have done without you.
- 1st WOMAN No problem, Patchem.
- 2nd WOMAN Anything to help a friend. *[PUSS bounds on. ALL make a fuss of him then exit.]*
- PATCHEM Hello there, Puss. Have you come for a pair of boots? *[PUSS nods and tries to walk on two legs.]* Oh yes, I'm sure you would look very elegant! *[COLIN enters.]*
- COLIN Well Patchem, if I'm going to fight that Ogre, I'd better get these boots mended!

- PATCHEM You're really serious about this, aren't you?
- COLIN Indeed I am.
- PATCHEM In that case, wait here a moment. *[HE exits into the back of the shop. PUSS mimes to COLIN that he wants a pair of boots.]*
- COLIN Oh, you want some too? That's going to be very expensive. Twice as much leather! *[PUSS looks at his four paws, and then stands up on two.]* Why you clever old thing. You'll be talking next! *[PATCHEM comes back with a brand new pair of boots.]*
- PATCHEM Here, try these on for size.
- COLIN Patchem, they're brand new. I can't afford these.
- PATCHEM Don't bother about the cost. If you are going to do what you say, I'll make you a present of them.
- COLIN I couldn't possibly.
- PATCHEM I'll tell you a story about these boots.

[The lights fade down to put PATCHEM, COLIN and PUSS into a spot on one side of the stage. The light comes up through the back wall of the shop. The characters and action that PATCHEM describes is played out in "pantomime" by members of the COMPANY and accompanied by music.]

MUSIC – PATCHEM'S STORY

Years ago when I had just finished my apprenticeship, an old man made his way into town. No one knew him or had seen him before and people grew very suspicious. The Ogre had already started to plunder and pillage other towns and we wondered if this stranger was one of his henchmen. To everyone's surprise he said he was just passing through and wanted to find the local cobbler. He came into the shop and asked me to carry out a very special task for him. He wanted a pair of boots making. Not any old pair of boots, but ones to a specific design, shape and size. He gave me the leather and more than enough money for the work and insisted that I stay up all night to complete the task. At first I told him that would be impossible but something about him – something magical – made me agree to his request. All through the night I worked, never stopping for food or drink. On and on until finally, as daybreak came, I hammered in the last tack. I was so exhausted I fell asleep at the workbench. The old man came back into the shop and woke me up. I showed him the boots and he was very pleased with my work. A feeling of immense satisfaction came over me and the old man looked as though a great burden had been lifted from his shoulders. Then he said a very odd thing. He asked me to put away the boots and keep them safe for one day a young man would be in need of them. I asked him who that young man was and his parting words as he left the shop were 'You'll know. You'll know when the moment is right to give the boots away.'

[The lights fade on the up stage scene and return to the shop.] From that moment on the stranger was never seen again. But I never forgot his words. You'll know when the moment is right to give the boots away. I think that moment is now.

COLIN But Patchem –

PATCHEM Try them on. *[COLIN does and walks around in them.]* A perfect fit.

COLIN I can't thank you enough.

PATCHEM Don't thank me. Those boots have found their rightful owner. *[PUSS starts to paw at the boots.]*

COLIN What's the matter with you Puss? You like them? Beauties, aren't they?

PATCHEM I think he'd like a pair! *[PUSS nods.]*

COLIN Puss, I'm ashamed of you. Cadging off Patchem!

PATCHEM I wish I could fit you up, but business isn't exactly roaring. I need to get rid of the existing stock.

COLIN Why don't you come with me? We'll team up and go and fight that Ogre together!

PATCHEM Nothing I'd like better, but who would mind the shop?

COLIN I'm sure your friends in the village would help. Oh do come Patchem.

PATCHEM You know, I will! I could do with some adventure in my life!

COLIN Get a few things together and we'll leave tonight. *[MELINDA enters.]*

MELINDA Hello again. I'm afraid I left without taking my shoes, Patchem.

PATCHEM I have them here your Highness. *[HE goes to the counter and gets her shoes.]*

MELINDA *[Noticing COLIN'S boots.]* They are very fine boots.

COLIN Patchem gave them to me. I needed a new pair before I set off on my journey.

MELINDA *[Crestfallen.]* You're going away?

COLIN I intend to find a way to rid the town of that dreadful Ogre.

MELINDA But Colin, that's too dangerous. Anything could happen to you.

COLIN Don't worry. I shall have two allies with me. *[PATCHEM stands one side of COLIN and PUSS the other.]*

MELINDA I must say you're all very brave. Please be careful.